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ART. IX. — POLITICAL REFLEXIONS BY A JAPANESE TRAVELLER.\*<sup>1</sup>

IT is now eleven years since I first left Japan. At that time it was not permitted to Japanese to leave the country for purposes of travel; nevertheless, I managed to escape, for I was anxious to study foreigners in their own countries. I remained three years away from Japan, staying principally in England and America. I had already read about those countries, and I desired much to see how Government was carried on. The impression made in Japan by foreigners, when they first came there, was so great, that Japanese thought that their wise men must be almost like Gods, and that their political institutions must be perfect, because inventions were so wonderful. Now many Japanese have become much wiser, because they have lived in foreign countries and studied them deeply. Certain foreign men had a very great fame amongst Japanese youth,—such, for instance, as George Washington, whose greatness became very soon celebrated amongst us. Therefore I was very anxious to come to America, principally on his account. Whilst in England and America I studied great deal, chiefly in science and language, and returned to Japan in 1868 when the war was going on. After the revolution, when Japanese began to introduce reform into the Government, I saw they were too ignorant in political matters to understand properly how to make new Constitution; then I determined once more to come abroad to study especially the political condition of various countries. For six years I have been engaged in travel in Europe and America, and now I venture to tell my friends in this country my conclusions. I beg they will forgive my frankness. When foreigners come to Japan they write quite freely what they think about it. Sometimes they write very foolish things, staying only short time, and telling results as if they had made deep studies. Sometimes they even say things which are not true and not kind. I will try and avoid this, but at the same time I will tell quite truly and

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\* We have thought it best to give this contribution to our readers in the form in which it reached us, without altering the idiom. — Ed.

sincerely my feeling, because sometimes the view of the foreigner is of great assistance to a people. Japanese people received great benefit from the frank opinions about them of foreigners, because they were so accustomed to their faults, they never remarked them, but they were quite plain to strangers. It is the same with individuals. They cannot see themselves exactly like others see them. It is true that there are plenty of European travellers who have written about America, but they are all Christians, and very often they write from jealousy and mean motives. Having same religion and same manners, they cannot write so impartially as a man who comes from a much older and different kind of civilization, and who has no religion, but who tries to look at things from more high and pure ground of philosophy, which is taught by the great Master Confucius. So I beg my kind readers will believe that I have no other motive but to try and help them, by pointing out their faults, in the same way that many of their good missionaries have tried to help Japanese — but I shall not remark much upon their moral condition, however, now — though on this subject there is a great deal to be said, which I shall write in a book for Japanese in their own language. At present I desire rather to discuss American political state, because I have now studied very carefully for many months the interesting questions connected with this Government, and I think it might be possible to tell something that might improve it — but to propose any plan by which the moral condition of a people can be improved is indeed most difficult.

I will now go on with my political reflexions. When I left Japan six years ago, I determined to study Europe first — to begin with the country whose political condition was most backward, and to end with the country whose political condition was most forward. I decided therefore to land in Constantinople and to return to Japan by San Francisco. In Turkey I remained very short time. It chiefly interested me on account of the effect of religion upon the Government. I then went to Vienna, Berlin, Rome, Paris and London. I stayed nearly one year at each place. Finally I came here. Now I see how necessary it is to examine deeply political questions. When I was here the first time, I did not examine at all, and when I returned to Japan I still thought this country was more advanced than other countries

in political affairs. Now I have quite changed. I will state my reasons why I think, of all countries I have been in, this country is most backward. It is because here there is no change. In every other country there is change. The times we live in are the most changeable times that have ever been known. Japan changes, China changes even a little, Turkey changes also, only a little, because of religion, all the other European countries change, only America in politics for a hundred years never changes. Always just the same Constitution — but since that Constitution was made, steamboats, railroads, telegraphs, many wonderful things have been invented, so the manners and customs of people have been changed, their opinions about every thing are quite different, liberty and freedom are being everywhere introduced, only in America the rights of the people have not been increased for one hundred years. In Europe the people will not allow this; they make revolutions, then comes more freedom. In twenty years how much has happened! In Austria Hungary has been separated and free institutions have been given — with two chambers. At Vienna also in two chambers all different races in the empire are represented, and can talk freely. In Germany, Empire has been formed with chambers also rather free, only Bismarck has too much power, but there is no old Constitution to stop freedom when he dies. In Italy, the whole country has been united, bad Governments of Naples and Pope have been abolished, king has no power — all power is in chambers, quite free. In France, Empire has been abolished, free chambers have been established, only they have one bad thing, written Constitution, — only it is very short, and can easily be changed. In England, Queen has no power at all — House of Commons, that is, people's House, has all power. Immediately when people want, they can change Government. One hundred years ago when American Constitution was made, people in Europe could not press themselves upon Governments; now it is almost impossible for any Government to resist will of the people. In France it is quite impossible. Always almost immediately they make revolutions. In England, also, it is not possible. There the people make peaceable revolutions, but Government never can go against the people. Only here that is possible. This is the only country in the world, where, in

a popular election, majority cannot elect their candidate. One hundred years ago this Government was most free of all Governments. Since that time all other Governments have moved on, pressed by the people, pressed by the people, always pressed ; so they go forward quite rapidly in a free direction. Only this never moves. It is the same with that remarkable people, the Chinese. I remark much resemblance between Americans and Chinese. They are both afraid to move from old customs. This is in many respects a good thing. It is just opposite in Japan. Japanese go too fast ; they think they know everything, when they know very little, and they go on rashly—but Americans are too slow in politics. Owing to their splendid country, and to steamboats and railroads, they are increasing more rapidly in numbers than any other people in the world. So they have not the same excuse as Chinese. They are not increasing—so they do not require to change political institutions—but how can a Constitution which was made for two millions of people a hundred years ago, be good for forty millions of people now, when all other countries have changed since then, and steam has altered every thing ? Then it was quite natural to elect a man to be President for four years, and give him almost same power as the King of England had then, and allow him to govern as he likes, even when the whole country is opposed to him. Then all the world was governed that way. I do not think in Europe now is one king who would dare to govern, like President Johnson, with the whole country against him,—only Prince Bismarck, or the Emperor of Russia, could perhaps try, but even then it would not be safe. In all the countries I visited in Europe, the Cabinets must be in the Houses of Legislature to answer to the people's representatives. Only here members of Cabinet do not care about the people's representatives ; they stay outside, they do what they like in their Council with the President. He appoints who he likes to be his ministers. He has so much power he can even make the Senate generally accept his men, like he did the other day, and his measures. To get rid of him, the Congress must impeach him, but how difficult is this, and how bad it looks to the rest of the world ! So the Congress does not dare. Also he can bribe with offices so many people. What king can give so much without consulting the people's two Houses of Legislature as the President of the United States ? Only

he must consult the Senate, but if he is obstinate man, they quarrel, then comes difficulty. If he is opposed in politics to Congress for four years, if they do not impeach him, they must veto his measures, if he won't yield. Then what? If he proposes measures and the Congress vetoes them, and they won't yield — then what? All this is very bad — very good a hundred years ago — but very bad now. Then the people did not know their rights, now they do. They want the President to govern as they think right — not as he thinks right. This is called “popular government.” They are now going to have that in Japan. Surely it is time that this great country should have it also. Only one step have they made in a hundred years, and that is backwards, when they gave votes to a different race, who have no education and small intelligence, to help to elect a President who for four years is not responsible to anybody. Already it has been found that many things are not provided for in the Constitution. I counted nineteen difficulties during last election for which no provision was made in the Constitution.

Suppose a negro is elected President, the Constitution permits him to have too much power. He should certainly be made responsible to the country. The only way to do this is to follow the example of more advanced countries of Europe, and oblige all the members of his Cabinet to be in the Congress. They would probably all be negroes, but if the country did not like them, and there was a majority against them, they would have to resign. In that way you could again get a white Cabinet, otherwise it is not possible. How can you go on with a Constitution that allows such great dangers to exist? It has been proved, by what has just happened, that at any time they may occur again, but never again could you settle the question by eight to seven. I have conversed with many persons who say that never again will they agree to that. In Japan it would not be possible for those seven men to live, who have proposed this plan. After it failed they must commit *seppukku*, or the “self-despatch.” Though I do not approve this practice, I think, until countries have arrived at an advanced political state, it is in some respects good. It makes men very careful in proposing political plans. The practice, in this country, by which political enemies kill each other with pistols, does not make them so careful, but perhaps it is necessary while the old Consti-

tution lasts, but with the introduction of popular government and a responsible Cabinet it might be abolished. In Japan it is hoped in the same way to abolish "self despatch," which I think is a better check upon political violence and bad language than duels. In Japan all editors of newspapers writing like those in this country would be obliged to perform this act, and even Mr. Tilden after he had got majority of nearly 300,000 votes could not survive his defeat with honor, but this is not because he has used bad language, but because he himself has been so much abused. For this reason he would have to commit *seppukku*. In my book which I am going to write in Japan upon the moral condition of this country, I will show how far the higher morality of Japan is due to *seppukku*, so that they may not abolish it rashly, or without providing some other check, by which all persons using violent language, slandering other persons, bribing other persons, being bribed, making false returns, frightening voters, or otherwise behaving badly, may be restrained. None of these vices exist now in Japan. This is in consequence of former Government when such things were not possible. I believe they in this country entirely result from the hundred years old Constitution.

It is true that I observe these same vices also in European countries but much less. As in Mahometan countries religion affects the politics, so also in Christian countries the vices of politics are different. As Japan is neither Mahometan nor Christian, I do not think that popular government, with responsible Cabinet, will produce the same vices as in Christian countries. They will be different, some kind of a vice made from mixture of Confucian Philosophy and Buddhism. If you had in this country Mikado, Emperor, or King, or Sultan, remedy would be easy, but, with President who has so much power, it is more difficult. It is always difficult when a man once has got power to take it away, and when he has got it by hundred year old Constitution, it is almost impossible.

Still I will explain my meaning. To make this Republic into a more free Government, there is no necessity to change the name. To take away power from President, there is no necessity to change his name. So I do not propose, because I want to see this Government more free, to change any names; the only thing to be done is, abolish the Constitution, then all is simple. Then make a law

that President must choose his Cabinet from two Houses of Congress. Then make another law and give more power to House of Representatives, because that is people's House more than Senate. There are many reasons why it is not a good thing, when Government is responsible, for Senate to have more power than House of Representatives. Now it is necessary, because without responsible Cabinet the President is so powerful ; but when power is taken from President, then some power should also be taken from Senate and given equally to House of Representatives or lower House. Only in America has lower House least power. In other countries all the power is in lower House. Then when the President and his Cabinet are in opposition to the country, at once you find it out in the House of Representatives much quicker than in the Senate. Immediately then there must be a vote of confidence in the Government. If the majority in the House of Representatives is against the Government, then at once the President and the Cabinet must both resign. The reason why it is best that the majority in the House of Representatives should decide this matter is, because they are elected every two years and the Senate only every six years ; therefore, when the opinion in the country changes, you see the change quickly in the House of Representatives, but only slowly in the Senate.

So when the House of Representatives decides that the President and the Cabinet are governing opposite to the will of the people, naturally they must be at once turned out. This is free government,—it is very simple, but the American people do not yet understand it, having been so long blinded by hundred year old Constitution. At once a new President must be elected by the people, not as he is elected now, but directly by the people—something like the plan I read in the last number of this Review proposed by Ex-Senator Buckalew, so that it is impossible for minority to force him on majority. While he is being elected, the old President might still stay till new one is elected. If the old President thinks majority in the House of Representatives is mistaken, he might ask the country to elect him again. Then, if he is re-elected, he must choose different men for his Cabinet who can obtain a majority to support them, because it might be sometimes that country likes the President but does not like his Cabinet. Now the Senate can say if they do not



like the Cabinet, but the country can say nothing. Much better plan is for the country to say if they do not like the Cabinet, and the Senate to say nothing.

Very often the Senate and the country do not agree: then the people must decide. Always in a free country people should decide every thing, — not Senate, not President, only people. This is difference between free government and old kind of government. With free government, all the power is with people; with old government under hundred year old Constitution, people have no power; only President and Senate have power. So, often there is great danger. This danger will increase, because although the American people, like Chinese, are most patient people, at last they will rebel, when they find that hundred year old Constitution makes only difficulty, and that sometimes one Judge of Supreme Court must be chosen to decide who is to be President. If the President promises some kind of reform and does not perform his promise because Senate will not allow him, even though people desire reform they can do nothing. They must wait four years. President Grant promised great deal; he performed nothing, but people must wait. Now President Hayes promises reform: perhaps he will do something, perhaps he will do nothing, because Senate will not let him, but people must wait. People do not approve all kinds of robbery and extravagance, but they cannot prevent it. Always they must wait. How much longer will they wait and pay heavy taxes, to see their money make Senators and politicians and their friends rich? Not always.

In all countries except America there is a liberal or radical party. This party is also called party of progress, or sometimes party of action. It is always in favor of reform, and desires to abolish old institutions and to secure more rights for the people. In this country there is no party of progress. There is the Republican party in favor of "federal rights," and there is the Democratic party in favor of "State rights," but there is no Reform party in favor of "people's rights." Republicans and Democrats are both old-fashioned Conservatives. In this country there are no real reformers in favor of radical changes, like there are in other countries. Therefore, this country now is not "going ahead"; it is "going astern," as sailors say. Excuse me if I am speaking so plain. It is because I love American people very

much that I want to see them get their rights, and have pure and cheap government instead of dishonest and expensive one. Therefore reform is needed. Therefore hundred year old Constitution must be abolished. No other Constitution in the world is so old, it stops all reform.

The other day I was reading Declaration of Independence, saying every man was born equal, and possesses inalienable right of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This is only talking. Constitution does not secure this right. When I converse with colored person from Louisiana, he tells me life not safe, liberty only limited, pursuit of happiness very difficult. White persons from South Carolina explain exactly the same thing. They tell me Constitution prevents pursuit of happiness for white people in Southern States very much. Many clever politicians with whom I have talked have told me difficulty of all kinds of reform arises from old Constitution. One Republican gentleman very celebrated — therefore I cannot tell his name — even said to me, “our Constitution is like an old gun, it wants new stock, new lock, and new barrel.” Therefore, no doubt, to throw away old Constitution would be a good thing; only they say, Who can dare to say this? It is too dangerous to propose such a thing! No man will venture to be the first. Certainly he will be much attacked. People will say he is a revolutionist — but a nation which won its independence by warlike revolution need not be afraid of making progress by peaceable one. I think American politicians rather timid. Therefore, I am not writing for politicians, but for people — and already I have said enough. The American people are very clever people. They do not require long explanations; only they require a hint. They are so busy making money they have not had time to examine this matter; therefore I have examined it for them. But what is the good of making money when you have to spend all in taxes? When government is cheap, people get rich much quicker. Therefore, stop a little from making money and think how you can most quickly abolish Constitution and make reforms to suit present time. Better to do this now than wait till some revolution comes and you will lose all money. If Supreme Court Judge had not decided quickly the other day, even now you might have been fighting, and your money would be soon flying away. Next time, perhaps, you may

not find a Judge so clever and quick. Remember how great danger you have escaped. Every time you will not be so fortunate. This is very serious warning. American people are too thoughtless. When they escape danger, immediately they forget it. In this matter they are not like Chinese, more like French people. Chinese take warnings, reflect a great deal, but don't change. French people never take warnings, do not reflect at all, but always change. Best plan is, —first, take warnings, then reflect, and then change. Do not say this is only Japanese, and his English is still not good, therefore he knows nothing. I pray you not to despise this because I am a man of low degree and moderate understanding, for this is a wise saying, "a precious stone in the dirt is apparently worthless, but he who discovers, polishes, and wears it, himself becomes of value."

When I was student in London, I learnt Latin, and when I read the motto upon your review I felt bold and became much encouraged, and I determined to write freely, because it told me you would receive truth impartially, no matter from whence it comes.

Therefore, my American friends, I now call upon you to remember and to apply the words you have yourselves chosen — "Tros Tyriusque mihi nullo discrimine agetur."

SIONARA,  
*A Japanese Traveller.*